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Article

# Pragmatic Failure in Interpreting Some Proverbs found in SMAN 1 Lubuk Alung

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Phenomenon of using proverb in academic environment particularly school is usual right now. Not only using Indonesian proverb but also using English proverb, students are interested to apply them. The trend to use English as the L2 in presenting good philosophy of life is one method to help students to master and acquaintance with English. In term of English proverb, it is usually used to present condition of school environment, students, and the regulation of school which are managed systematically. Particularly, most of the English proverbs in SMAN 1 Lubuk Alung are applied to boost motivation of the students. In fact, there are some of them are misled in transferring the meaning from the real receptor language. The translation of the proverbs were dull and were not appropriate to English sense as receptor language. Learners are unaware of the pragmatic knowledge that a proverb has because they do not recognize the purpose of the communicative act that a proverb has socio-pragmatically. I conclude that the proverbs which were taken from Senior High School No. 1 Lubuk Alung, West Sumatera tends to the incorrect translation so that the students have a problem called pragmatic failure. The process of applying the English proverbs to represent the Indonesian proverbs is not suitable in the Receptor Language (RL), English. There is misleading of choosing word and also the arrangement/structure of those words. The effort of delivering similar message in another language was failed since they did not know how to transfer knowledge about linguistic, cultural, and social information about the target language.

**I. INTRODUCTION**

In study area such as school, all things are arranged mannerly and fitly. It happens because school is the sacred place in order to teach, guide, and lead students in straight ways in term of education. There are so many

regulation and requirement which must be obeyed by students. However, not only regulation but also some of motivation are provided by the authority's person such as teachers. This motivation can be one of the boosts for students in developing their own

potential skill to be the best. Sometimes, those positive words are implied in form of proverbs. A *proverb* is a short traditional saying in general use. It usually expresses some obvious truth or familiar experience. (Candelaria: 2007). Every countries has proverbs which reflected by cultural and social background of the society. A proverb usually presents in the form of phrase or clause which needs different approach in translating it. The most important aspect in translating phrase includes emotional expressiveness and conciseness of thought expression which reflect social and culture of the contextual situation (Subbotina, 2013).

Translation, when practiced by relatively bilingual individuals but especially when by persons with limited proficiency in one or both languages, involves a risk of spilling-over of idioms and usages from the source language into the target language (Jepsen, 2010). The ideal translation should be firstly is Accurate: reproducing as exactly as possible the meaning of the source text. Secondly, it must be Natural: using natural forms of the receptor language in a way that is appropriate to the kind of text being translated. Thirdly it must be Communicative: expressing all aspects of the meaning in a way that is readily understandable to the intended audience (Larson, 1998). However, from those three ideal measurements, the translator in SMAN 1 Lubuk Alung did not meet them. There are several lack of doing translation. Apart of the context, the main responsibility of English class is to improve the skill in communication. As it deals with context, the English teaching is not only focusing on form but also to provide the pragmatic understanding. In other wors, even if students can utter perfect English structure, it does not guarantee they can used it appropriately in the context of real life communication, such as ordering food or addressing question. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1997) conducted reaseach which indicates pragmatic competence in academic counseling sessions and concluded that

pragmatic errors were worse than grammatical errors.

In order to figure out the real meaning of a proverb, students have competence in pragmatic aspect. The terms pragmatic competence refers to those linguistic competence of the user which allow them to select appropriate utterances based on the context by means of participating in linguistic interactions.

The failure of speakers in using contextually appropriate utterances is known as pragmalinguistics failure. Homes & Brown (, 1987, p.526) defined pragmalinguistic failure "a misunderstanding of the intended illocutionary, or pragmatic, force of an utterance". Here, illocutionary force refers to the impact a linguistic form on the addressee or reader. In other word, the illocutionary force is the statement or information that speaker intends to deliver to the listener. For instance, when the speaker said "It's quite hot in here", semantically can be defined as a statement about the physical condition of the speaker, yet in illocutionary terms, the utterance it can be interpreted as a request to the listener to open the window or to power on the air conditioner (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1999).

Indonesia language, as Malay language, have unique collection of proverb (Isam et.al: 2014). When addressing pragmalinguistic failure, one should take into consideration the cultural gap between the L1 and L2. Many students, especially in Indonesia has difficulties in translating proverb into English. The current research reflects the students difficulties in translating proverb in the context of pragmatic approach.

## II. METHODS

The curent research focuses on the pragmatic failure in interpreting proverb. The subject are students of SMAN 1 Lubuk Alung. The research uses translation model by Larson (1984). There are two models of translation, form-based and meaning-based. A form-

based translation is usually referred to as a literal translation, in which translators are attempting to follow the form of the source language. Secondly is The meaning-based translation. It is the one which is known as the idiomatic translation – the meaning of the source text is expressed in the natural form of the target language (Larson, 1984: 15). Translations fall on a continuum from very literal to literal, to modified literal, to near idiomatic, to idiomatic, and may even move on to unduly free. The goal of a good translator is to translate idiomatically, by means of making many adjustments in the forms. In other words, the translator's goal should be to reproduce a text in the target language which communicates the same message as the source language but using the natural grammatical and lexical choices of the target language.

### III. RESULT

The misconception of the transferring meaning can be happened. It can be seen in from the following data:



Figure 1: Data 1

Figure 1 shows the pragmatic failure in translating “Do Not For Give Up”. This data is taken from one of schools in Lubuk Alung, Padang where hang on the ceiling of the school on May 2017. The proverb contains of five words and is intended as a wise words or motivation for all students in the school who read it. Looking from the arrangement of the words, there is ungrammatical used of word. The use of preposition “for” is incorrect. In term of translating the meaning of Indonesian

language into English, the writer of this text is not aware of the concept of translation.

Translation, then, consists of studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning, and then reconstructing this same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context. (Larson 1998, p. 3). What Larson means in that statement is about the requirements which should have been followed by the translator. In doing translation, the process of transferring meaning from Source Language to Receptor Language is important. The social, culture, and society's environment take the high position to determine the meaning and message of the proverbs. However from the above data, the proverb breaks the rule.

#### *Analysis:*

RL: Do Not For Give Up (English language as the receptor language). \*

SL: Tidak untuk Menyerah (Indonesian Language as the source language).

Grammatically, the sense of Indonesian language on this proverb is actually correct. However, in the term of English sense, the proverb is not appropriate grammatically. In English or western countries related when someone in struggling to catch something such a dream, this proverb appears as the background. However, in the right way, the proverb is said “Do Not Give Up”. Nevertheless, the creator of the proverb changes it into different form that is slightly inaccurate in term of English sense. It is a kind of literal translation, where the form of Indonesian language is transformed into the English Language. Unfortunately, the translations do not sound natural. In addition the process of translation is also not accurate although in the meaning in Indonesian sense is correct.

This is because the translator's thoughts and choices of words are too strongly influenced by the original text. A good way to avoid this is to set the text aside and translate a few sentences from memory in order to get the natural patterns of thought in the target language. In the RL that is shown in the picture is actually better to change into *If at first you don't SUCCEED, try, try, try again.* This proverb is more suitable. It is taken from The Concise Oxford dictionary of Proverbs 2003. It represents the purpose of the writer of this text who done the transferring concept of Indonesian Proverb into English sense. Since, this writer in the very first place chooses English proverb to convey the message behind it. In addition this is the best way to express it. Not only the essential message that is transferred but also the attempt to make an arrangement and choices of the word describe naturally into the receptor language.

Proverbs are important aspects of verbal discourse within the socio-cultural contexts in which knowledge, ideas and emotions are communicated. They reflect the people's social and cultural orientations, philosophy, worldviews, as well as psychological and literary make-ups that generally depict the experience of life.

Foreign language speaker aware communicative difficulty with proverbs. However, it would be improper to know only the literal meaning of the words used in a proverb in order to explain what it means or what message it conveys. In addition, knowing the general meaning of proverbs would also be insufficient to understand what they mean. Indeed, to know the meaning of a proverb in most cases relies heavily on the socio-pragmatic knowledge that a speaker and listener have. Such knowledge includes the linguistic and sociocultural knowledge and this represents the socio-pragmatic knowledge.



Figure 2: Data 2

Figure 2 shows translation failure of expression "Tell yourself: I am adequate. (Katakan pada dirimu "Saya Bisa"). There are six words of English and 5 words of Indonesian language. This proverb is also found in Senior High School No. 1 Lubuk Alung. As like the first picture, this text seems has mission to encourage students in that school to be confident in their selves. It is little bit different from the previous picture; the writer puts the proverbs into two languages in line.

RL: Tell Yourself "I am Adequate"

SL: Katakan Pada Dirimu "Saya Bisa"

However, in term of good translation, the writer makes a mistake here, in the Receptor Language the word "adequate" stands for "bisa" in Indonesian Language. This word becomes in appropriate since the word "adequate" means to express something enough or quite good in term of satisfactory for particular purpose. In contrary, this word represents the word "bisa" in Bahasa which refers to "can" in English. In addition, the arrangement of words (form) of RL is actually literal translation. The form or structure is receptor language is similar as the target language. So, in more natural way, the proverb may in the form of "Tell yourself, You Can Do It". This seems more acceptable in the sense of receptor language. However, the translator failed to transfer the meaning into receptor language. He only focused on shifting the source text literally into receptor language.

Moreover, according to Nida (1982: 21), the focus of attention has shifted from emphasis on the starting point, namely, the source text, to the manner in which a text is understood by those who receive and interpret it. Such a development is quite natural in view of the fact that all communication is goal oriented and moves from the source's intention to the receptor's interpretation. Moreover, to preserve the content of the message the form must be changed (Nida, 1982: 5). However, this proverb shows the contrary from what it should be. Although in intention of the writer wants to present the motivation words in English is good, but the decision of putting the words is not befitting. The process of adjusting the context of its words drags the translation in form of unnatural in receptor language.

The effort of borrowing English proverbs to provoke student to learn and understand English as well as motivate students are the purpose of this text. It is good, although there is misconception of applying it. The creator or translator of this text converts the context Indonesian culture and adopts it to the English sense in order to produce it impressively. The better translation of this proverb might be like this "I Know I Can Make It" or it can be say like "I Can Make It Real". So, it still has an English style.

Basically, in translating text from Source Language to Receptor Language is involved by transferring the meaning, culture, social context, and situational context. So that in the

end, people who read it can understand clearly. There is a force from the translator to make the source language fits into receptor language (target language) in which it was English. If the idiom does not work in the target language; do not force it into the translation. The ideal translation will be accurate as to meaning and natural as to the receptor language forms used. An intended audience who is unfamiliar with the source text will readily understand it. The success of a translation is measured by how closely it measures up to these ideals. Consequently, it can be said that Student`s in SMA 1 Lubuk Alung as EFL learners misinterpret proverbs and lack pragmatic knowledge required for the interpretation of such proverbs. Moreover, they also seem to lack semantic and syntactic knowledge, that lead to pragmlinguistic failure. The influence of L1 pragmatic knowledge leads to misinterpret the proverbs concerned pragmatically.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Referring to above analysis, it can be concluded that the two proverbs which taken from Senior High School No. 1 Lubuk Alung, West Sumatera tends to the incorrect translation. The process of applying the English proverbs to represent the Indonesian proverbs is not appropriate in the Receptor Language (RL), English. There is misleading of choosing word and also the structure of those words. The use of literal translation is still used by those two data. Therefore from this fact, the cultural context of English is not fully transferred.

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